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The Patent Office

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Newport
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1. Your reference 60177/000

2. Patent application number (The Patent Office) 0211851.1 22 MAY 2002

3. Full name, address and postcode of the or of each applicant (underline all surnames) BIOQUELL UK LIMITED
Walworth Road
Andover
Hampshire
SP10 5AA

Patents ADP number (if you know it)

If the applicant is a corporate body, give the country/state of its incorporation

UK

8070930001

4. Title of the invention IMPROVEMENTS IN OR RELATING TO APPARATUS FOR DECONTAMINATING ENCLOSED SPACES

5. Name of your agent (if you have one) BOULT WADE TENNANT
"Address for service" in the United Kingdom to which all correspondence should be sent (including the postcode) VERULAM GARDENS
70 GRAY'S INN ROAD
LONDON WC1X 8BT

Patents ADP number (if you know it)

42001

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Country	Priority application number (if you know it)	Date of filing (day/month/year)

7. If this application is divided or otherwise derived from an earlier UK application, give the number and the filing date of the earlier application

Number of earlier application	Date of filing (day / month / year)

8. Is a statement of inventorship and of right to grant of a patent required in support of this request? (Answer 'Yes' if:
a) any applicant named in part 3 is not an inventor, or
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Patents Form 1/77

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Description 9

Claim(s) 2

Abstract

Drawing(s) 4

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Priority documents N

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Statement of inventorship and right to grant of a patent (Patents Form 7/77) N

Request for preliminary examination and search (Patents Form 9/77) N

Request for substantive examination (Patents Form 10/77) N

Any other documents
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11

I/We request the grant of a patent on the basis of this application.

Signature

Date

22 May 2002

12. Name and daytime telephone number of person to contact in the United Kingdom

Geoffrey C Bayliss
020 7430 7500

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IMPROVEMENTS IN OR RELATING
TO APPARATUS FOR DECONTAMINATING ENCLOSED SPACES

This invention relates to apparatus for
5 decontaminating enclosed spaces such as hospital wards
and clean rooms in which a manufacturing or other
processes take place in sterile conditions. This
application supplements the disclosure in our UK
Patent Application No. 0207452.4 filed on 28 March
10 2002.

Vaporised aqueous solution of hydrogen peroxide
has been used to decontaminate the internal surfaces
of enclosures used for aseptic processing in the
15 pharmaceutical industry since about 1990, but it has
always been difficult to use the same technology to
decontaminate larger volumes such as rooms.

The conventional design of the gas generator is a
20 closed loop design such as described in US Patent
5,173,258. In this design the hydrogen peroxide and
water vapours are produced by flash evaporation of an
aqueous solution into a circulated heated air stream
which carries the vapours to the space to be
25 decontaminated. The air and hydrogen peroxide/water
vapours mix with the air inside the chamber before
being returned to the gas generator, where the gas is
decomposed, dried, heated and more liquid is flash
evaporated and the air mixture is re-circulated to the
30 chamber.

The processes performed on the returned gas are
complex, and include the steps of decomposing the gas,
drying and re-heating. This complete process was
35 considered necessary because it was thought that the
hydrogen peroxide gas decomposed according to a half-
life rule and hence to maintain an adequate

concentration inside the chamber a circulating system that decomposed the gas and added a fresh supply was thought to be necessary. Recent work by Watling, (ISPE Conference Zurich, September 1999) has shown
5 that the gas does not decompose but is stable. It is therefore not necessary to remove the returning gas from the chamber.

10 S.S. Block reports in the 5th Edition of Disinfection, Sterilisation and Preservation page 189 that 3% hydrogen peroxide gives a log 8 reduction of Staphylococcus aureus in under 20 minutes. A much slower rate of deactivation has been found in
15 experimental work when exposing Staphylococcus aureus to gas generated from 35% solution, despite the fact that the process was operated below the dew point. Under these gassing conditions the first droplets of dew form on the organism at a much higher concentration that the original liquid, typically
20 about 65% w/w, the exact value depending on the moisture content of the carrier gas.

As stated above in the conventional system the air in the chamber to be decontaminated is dried prior to
25 injecting the decontaminating gas. This is done to allow a high level of gas concentration to be achieved before the onset of condensation, or if it is desired to run the process dry. The vapour pressure equations for hydrogen peroxide may be used to calculate the
30 concentration of the condensate when the solution is flash evaporated and passed into a chamber. If the RH in the chamber is high the condensation will form quickly but as a relatively weak solution. Evaporating 35%w/w hydrogen peroxide into a chamber at
35 20°C and 85% RH will cause the condensate to form at in excess of 6% w/w, although the concentration of the vapour will be about 120 ppm. It is well known that

6% hydrogen peroxide is active against microorganisms and will cause deactivation of surfaces. It is therefore not necessary to reduce the humidity in the chamber under normal operating conditions as the RH
5 will be less than 85% and hence the condensation will form at a concentration greater than 6%.

It is believed that the difference between the liquid process as reported by Block and a gaseous dew
10 process is the rate of delivery of the hydrogen peroxide condensation. It follows that using a standard recirculating gas generator placed outside the space to be decontaminated, there may not be an adequate evaporation capacity to achieve a
15 sufficiently high condensation rate to deactivate the organism inside the chamber. The deactivation process may be enhanced by the use of mixtures of chemicals but the principal of the rate of delivery still remains.

20 An analysis of the equations governing the vapour pressure of water and hydrogen peroxide as published in 1955 in the American Chemical society monograph "Hydrogen Peroxide" and edited by W. Schaub, shows
25 that the gas concentration inside a chamber may be raised to the dew point by flash evaporation, but as soon as the dew point is reached condensation will form at a higher concentration than the evaporated liquid thus reducing the gas concentration. The gas
30 concentration will continue to fall as more liquid is evaporated until the equilibrium vapour pressure for the evaporated liquid is reached at the temperature of the chamber.

35 This invention provides an apparatus for decontaminating an enclosed space comprising a passageway having an air inlet at one end and an

outlet at the other end, means to cause a flow of air through the passageway from the inlet to the outlet, means to heat the air flowing through the passageway to a predetermined temperature, evaporator means in
5 communication with the passageway, means to delivery liquid decontaminant from a supply of decontaminant to the evaporator means to be evaporated thereby and for the evaporant to be delivered to the air flow in the
10 passage to flow in the air flow from the outlet to the rooms to be decontaminated.

By placing the gas generator inside the room and simply heating the carrier gas and then evaporating this sterilant into the air stream it is possible to
15 use the available energy much more efficiently. The increase efficiency is derived from the removal of the system for decomposing and drying the carrier gas, and also because there is no need for any pipe work to transport the carrier gas and decontaminant from an
20 external generator.

This increased efficiency provides more energy for the primary function of heating the carrier gas and flash evaporating the liquid. The efficiency
25 increase is so great as it allows a trebling of the rate of flash evaporation from the same energy source and hence the achievable rate of formation of condensation once the dew point has been reached is also trebled.

30 The simplified design is also much smaller and lighter than a conventional gas generator and hence considerably less expensive to manufacture. It is therefore realistic to place a number of such devices
35 inside a chamber to be decontaminated to ensure that the decontaminating vapours reach all surfaces of the chamber.

Each simplified generator may have its own control system, which is linked to a control box external to the room and connected by a single control cable.

5

The following is a description of some specific embodiments of the invention, reference being made to the accompanying drawings, in which:

10

Figure 1 is a wholly diagrammatic view of an apparatus for delivering an air flow containing an evaporated decontaminant to an enclosed space;

15

Figure 2 is a similar view to Figure 1 showing the components of the apparatus including the evaporator, liquid sterilant supply and outlet nozzle in greater detail;

20

Figure 3 is a perspective view of a practical working apparatus;

Figure 4 is a plan view of the evaporator; and

25

Figure 5 is a cross-sectional view on the line 5-5 of Figure 4.

30

The apparatus will be described firstly with reference to Figures 1 and 2. Room air, which may or may not already contain previously supplied hydrogen peroxide and water vapour, is drawn into an inlet conduit 10 through a HEPA filter 11 by a variable speed motor driven fan 12. The HEPA filter 11 removes any particles from the air stream to ensure that the delivered air is of the correct quality when the generator is used in a clean room. The conduit delivers the air to a heater 13 where the temperature is raised to a predetermined level as described below.

35

The heated air then passes into an evaporator 14 where a liquid sterilant is flash evaporated. It is possible to combine the heater 13 and the evaporator 14 into a single unit with a heating element as shown in Figure 2 to 5 to which reference will be made later. The physical shape and dimensions of the combined heater/evaporator are designed to control the energy balance between that used to heat the carrier gas and that used for flash evaporation.

A sterilant liquid is stored in a container 15 and is pumped to the evaporator 14 by a liquid pump 16. The carrier gas and vapours are delivered from the evaporator through a conduit 17 to a distribution nozzle 18 for delivery of the sterilant vapour to the space to be decontaminated.

As shown in Figure 3, the whole of the apparatus may be supported in an open tubular steel framework 19 for ease of movement. Ideally, the apparatus should not be placed inside a housing unit. Any covering of the apparatus would restrict the sterilant gas movements around and through the apparatus, which is essential to ensure that the apparatus itself is also surface decontaminated because otherwise it may contaminate the area in which it is placed.

An ideal decontamination cycle may have three distinct phases. In the first, optional phase the relative humidity in the room or other enclosure is adjusted to a pre-set level. In the second phase the gas concentration of sterilant gas is raised to form a required layer of overall surfaces in the enclosure condensation for a sufficient length of time to achieve the required level of decontamination. In the third and last phase the sterilant is removed from the enclosure.

In practice, the apparatus would be used in conjunction with other equipment. If a HVAC system is available for the chamber then this may be used to achieve the required level of relative humidity at the start of the process, and if the HVAC exhausts to a safe area to remove the sterilant at the end. Alternatively a portable dehumidifier may be used to adjust the initial relative humidity and a catalytic scrubber used to circulate the gas to remove the sterilant.

In the decontamination cycle referred to above the initial phase of treatment in the adjustment of the relative humidity in the room or chamber may be omitted and the process commenced at the current prevailing conditions in the enclosure since the relative humidity in the enclosure would normally be well below dew point and so a considerable amount of sterilant/water vapour would need to be generated in the enclosure before condensation would occur.

Reference is now made to Figures 4 and 5 which illustrate the combined heater/evaporator 14/15 in greater detail. The heater/evaporator comprises a cast cylindrical aluminium block 30 which is mounted framework 19 with the axis of the block extending vertically. The lower end of the block has a shallow cylindrical recess 31 and a circular base plate 32 is attached to the periphery of the block extending across the recess by screws (not shown) the base plate 32 has a central aperture 33 in which the end of the inlet conduit 10 is mounted to deliver a supply of air to the recess in the block.

The upper end of the block also has a cylindrical recess 34 and a central top plate 35 is mounted on the periphery of the block over the recess by set screws.

36. The top plate 35 has a central aperture 39 in which an outlet conduit 40 from the block is mounted.

5 The block is formed with a central cylindrical cavity 37 extending into the block from the upper end thereof in which the outlet conduit 40 extends stopping short of the bottom of the cavity. The block 30 has a multiplicity of axially extending
10 passageways 38 adjacent the outer surface of the block and spaced around the block leading from the lower recess 31 and the block upper recess 34 for flow of air from the bottom recess to the top recess from where the air can flow into the cavity 37 and thence into the outlet conduit 40. The liquid sterilant
15 from the storage container 15 is delivered via one or more inlet conduits 41 which extend through the top plate 35 adjacent to the outlet conduit 40 and also lead into the cavity 37 in the block and again stop short of the bottom of the cavity. A second such
20 inlet conduit 41 is shown in dotted outline and preferably three such conduits are provided at spaced locations around the inlet conduit.

25 The body 30 is encircled by a cylindrical jacket in which an electrical resistance heater 42 is mounted for heating the body 30 to a requisite temperature to pre-heat the airflow through the block and also to ensure that sterilant delivered by the conduit 14 to the bottom of the cavity 37 of the block is flash
30 evaporated from the bottom of the cavity to produce a vapour which is entrained in the flow of air through the flow of heated air through the outlet conduit 40 for delivery into the room to be sterilised.

35 The heating unit of the heater-evaporator is coupled to the control unit to the apparatus and a temperature probe 44 is mounted in a radial drilling

45 in the body 30 below the cavity 37 to measure the
temperature of the body for adjusting, through the
control unit, the power supply to the resistance
heating element to enable the body to be maintained at
5 a requisite temperature for pre-heating the air
flowing through the body and flash evaporating the
sterilant delivered to the body.

1. An apparatus for decontaminating an enclosed space comprising a passageway having an air inlet at one end and an outlet at the other end, means to cause a flow of air through the passageway from the inlet to the outlet, means to heat the air flowing through the passageway to a predetermined temperature, evaporator means in communication with the passageway; means to ~~delivery liquid decontaminant from a supply of~~ decontaminant to the evaporator means to be evaporated thereby and for the evaporant to be delivered to the air flow in the passage to flow in the air flow from the outlet to the rooms to be decontaminated.

2. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1 wherein the outlet to the passage comprises one or more nozzles for directing air carrying evaporated decontaminant to selected regions of the room.

3. An apparatus as claimed in claim 1 or claim 2, wherein the means for heating the air also heats the decontaminant in the evaporator means to vaporise the decontaminant.

4. An apparatus as claimed in any of the preceding claims, wherein the means to deliver an air flow through the passageway comprise a fan located in the passageway adjacent the inlet thereof.

5. An apparatus as claimed in any of the preceding claims, wherein an air filter is included in the inlet to the passageway to remove articles from the air flowing into the passageway.

6. An apparatus as claimed in any of the preceding claims wherein the means to delivery liquid decontaminant to the evaporator means comprise a storage vessel for a supply of liquid decontaminant, a

flow path between the vessel and the evaporator and pump means in the flow path for delivering liquid decontaminant from the vessel to the evaporator means.

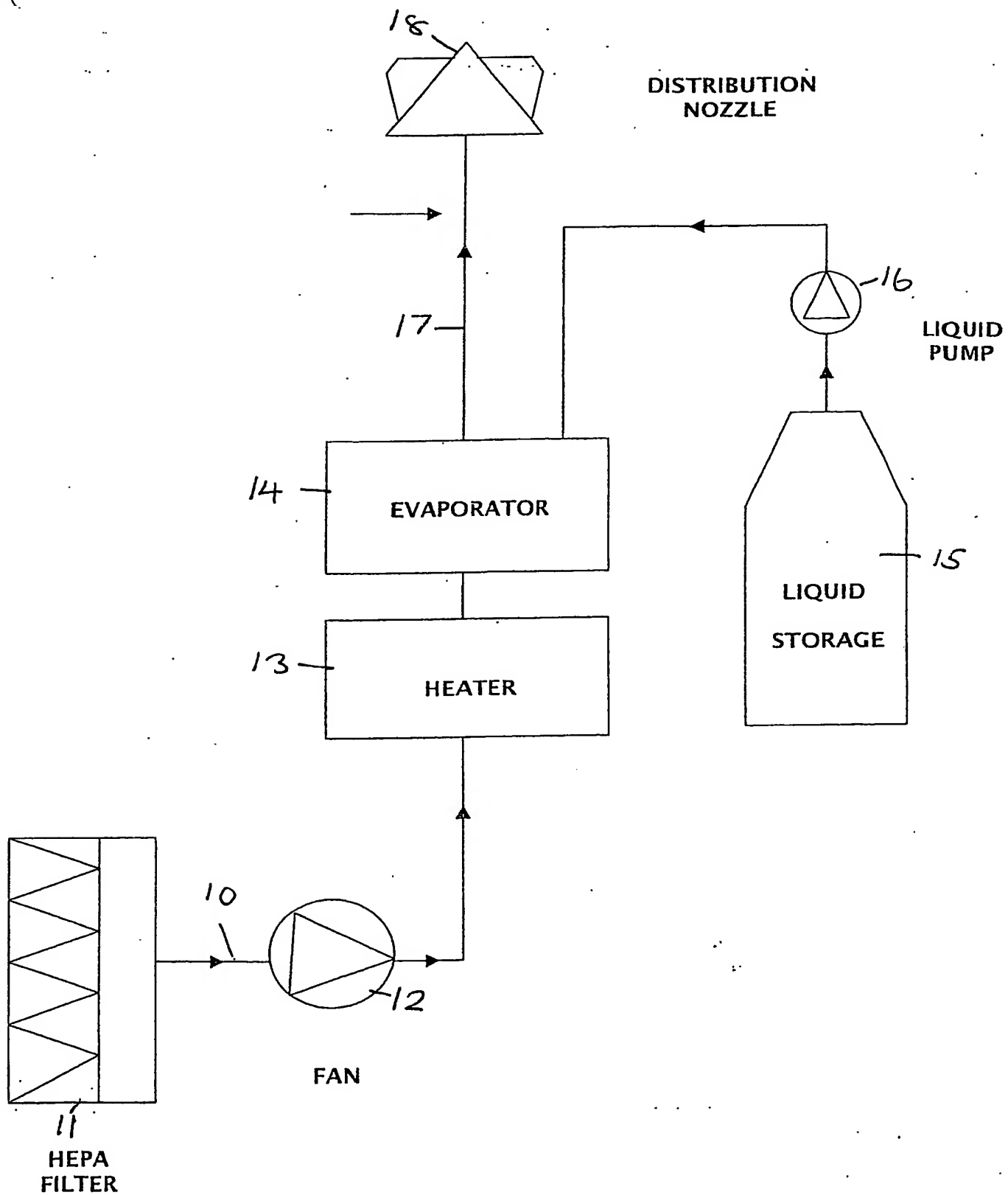
5 7. An apparatus for decontaminating an enclosed space comprising a plurality of apparatus as claimed in any of the preceding claims with the outlets from the respective apparatus directed to different regions of the enclosed space.

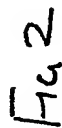
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8. An apparatus for decontaminating an enclosed space such as a room substantially as described with reference to and illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

15

FIG. 1





P & ID KEY	
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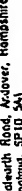

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FIG 3

